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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3833  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2502  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2625  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1118  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1894  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2249  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2674  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 5102  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1769  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 001128

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B.WALCH  
DRL FOR N. WILETT  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: ALLEGED SHIRI ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

REF: A. A) TD 314/090816-08  
[1](#)B. B) IIR 6 926 0054 09

Classified By: CDA Katherine Dhanani for reason 1.4 (d)

[1](#)1. (U) The GOZ newspaper The Herald reported on December 16 that Air Force Marshal Perrance Shiri survived an assassination attempt on September 13. According to The Herald, Shiri was ambushed while driving to his farm at 8:30 pm and suffered a gunshot wound to his right hand. The paper quoted Minister of Home Affairs Kembo Hohadi who, referring to bombings of a police station and railroad bridge in August and of a police station in November, said that the attack on Shiri appeared to be part of targeted terrorist attacks to destabilize the country.

[1](#)2. (U) The Shiri shooting comes after allegations from ZANU-PF that the MDC is operating paramilitary training camps in Botswana. Reacting to this, MDC secretary-general Tendai Biti has claimed that MDC officials abducted in Banket on October 30 have been tortured into confessing involvement in such camps.

[1](#)3. (SBU) With regard to the Shiri shooting, the MDC issued a press statement that reads in part: "The MDC notes with disbelief the assassination attempt of Air Marshall Perence (sic) Shiri as reported in The Herald...As a party, we condemn the use of violence in any form whatsoever as an instrument of navigating any political crisis...We therefore wish Perence (sic) Shiri a quick recovery wherever he is." During a diplomatic briefing on December 17, Biti said that the MDC leadership was divided on whether the attack was a ploy or an actual attack resulting from ZANU factionalism related to succession. In either case, however, the MDC was concerned it could be used as part of the justification for a declaration of a state of emergency and a crackdown on the MDC.

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COMMENT  
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14. (C) There is considerable doubt that the shooting of Shiri was an assassination attempt. Two close Embassy contacts with ties to ZANU-PF told us after talking with individuals close to Shiri that it was not. Additionally, reports indicate that Shiri was driving alone and was accosted near his farm at a choke point. It should have been relatively easy to kill him if that was the intent (Refs).

15. (C) Assuming this was not an assassination attempt, the motive remains unclear. Along with allegations of MDC training camps in Botswana, this could have been a ZANU-PF orchestrated attempt to blame the MDC for destabilization efforts, and possibly set the stage for a declaration of a state of emergency. Mohadi's statement in The Herald suggests as much. It is also possible this was a personal matter, divorced from politics.

16. (C) Although there have been some unusual incidents recently, particularly the Shiri shooting and soldiers' recent attacks on banks and moneychangers, the GOZ still appears confident it has firm control of overall security. There is no noticeable increase in police presence in Harare since the alleged attack on Shiri.

DHANANI